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Russians Can Kill Us in Space,

**JAMES
WIEGHART**

CIA Chief Says

Washington — The Soviet Union not only has the ability to orbit increasing sophisticated spy satellites to monitor United States military activities worldwide, but the Soviets also have perfected a killer satellite to shoot down U.S. spy-in-the-sky probes, CIA Director Stansfield Turner said yesterday.

Turner, in a wide-ranging meeting with reporters, confirmed that the Soviets have the "operational capability" of shooting down American intelligence satellites. This means that the Russians not only have successfully tested their killer satellites, but actually have some deployed, ready for use.

But Turner declined to say whether all U.S. satellites were vulnerable to the Soviet killer satellite or only those flying in a low earth orbit. He also re-

fused to be drawn into a detailed discussion on the implications of the Soviet anti-satellite capability for the strategic arms limitations talks (SALT), which rely on intelligence satellite monitoring for reinforcement.

But Turner made no effort to conceal his concern over the Soviet anti-satellite capability and the dangers it poses to U.S. security, particularly at a time when the United States is relying more heavily on so-called "technical intelligence" — intelligence gathered by electronic sensing or photographic satellites.

The United States has been testing various anti-satellite devices, some using lasers and others armed merely with high explosives, but defense officials have said privately that it will be at least several more years before such devices will be operational.

President Carter last April referred publicly to Soviet killer satellite tests as the "satellite intercept" program, but Carter did not sketch out in detail how extensive the program was.

With the SALT negotiators moving toward a Phase 2 agreement strictly limiting the number of nuclear weapon delivery vehicles that each side can maintain, Carter was clearly concerned about the problem of verification, which, of course, meant verification by satellite.

Defense Secretary Harold Brown discussed this concern more directly in a press conference last October in which he disclosed for the first time that the Soviets had perfected their anti-satellite weapon.

"That is something of concern to me," Brown said, "because we rely a good deal on our space systems for support of our military capability." In other words, by developing a killer satellite, the Soviets put themselves in a position of being able to wipe out the only effective means the United States had of policing the SALT agreements. At the same time, the Soviet press criticized U.S. tests of an anti-satellite device, a view that Brown said he found "quite troubling."

The whole intelligence satellite debate erupted

anew last week with the disclosure that a Soviet-launched spy satellite powered by a nuclear reactor had gone amok and threatened to come down over Canadian soil.

As a result of the radiation hazard posed by the Soviet Cosmos 954, Carter said at his press conference on Monday that he would favor an out-and-out ban on all "earth-orbiting satellites with atomic radiation material in them." Carter said nothing about the Soviet killer satellites, but administration sources said that any negotiations aimed at instituting safeguards in the satellite programs could cover explosives and other dangerous substances of any kind, whether nuclear or not.

Turner made no effort yesterday to minimize the significance of an anti-satellite capability in the rough-and-tumble military competition that exists between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Unlike the Soviets, who are beefing up their ground-based espionage activities around the world, the U.S. is cutting back its conventional spy force in favor of technical intelligence, Turner said. As a re-

sult, more and more of the U.S. intelligence product comes from spy satellites, electronic eavesdropping and other technical means.

Ironically, Turner already is under fire from underlings in his own CIA for his decision to fire about 800 employees from the clandestine operation division. This, of course, will increase the CIA's dependence on technical sources and, therefore, its vulnerability to Soviet killer satellites.

But the administration is convinced that its emphasis on technical intelligence will pay off in the long run because it is cheaper, more efficient and thorough, and generally less obtrusive and less likely to lead to conflict than cloak-and-dagger operations on the ground.

The development of a killer satellite by the Soviets may give them a short-run advantage—but it is an advantage that would be cancelled out as soon as the U.S. anti-satellite program becomes operational. Meanwhile, the administration hopes that progress in SALT and the need for intelligence satellites as a means of policing the agreements, will insure that both sides will leave each others' satellites alone.

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